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Dated

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Effective form

1/77
JAN00 E505536-1 D02319
P0177700 0.00-0000907.6

Request for grant of a patent

(See the notes on the back of this form. You can also get an explanatory leaflet from the Patent Office to help you fill in this form)

The Patent Office

Cardiff Road
Newport
Gwent NP9 1RH

1. Your reference

AP5077ES/MILLER/GBRI/PH/JB

2. Patent application number

0000907.6

(The Patent Office will fill in this part)

14 JAN 2000

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (underline all surnames)

MOTOROLA LTD
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England

Patents ADP number (If you know it)

118 000 2

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation

UNITED
KINGDOM

UNITED KINGDOM

4. Title of the invention

INTERFACE CIRCUIT AND METHOD FOR DIGITAL SIGNALS

5. Name of your agent (if you have one)

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (including the postcode)

PETER HUDSON
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Patents ADP number (if you know it)

232694004

6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and (if you know it) the or each application number

Country

Priority application number
(if you know it)

Date of filing
(day / month / year)

7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application

Number of earlier application

Date of filing
(day / month / year)

8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? (Answer 'Yes' if:

☒ YES ☐ NO

- a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
- b) there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or
- c) any named applicant is a corporate body.

(See note (d))

Patents Form 1/77

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Description 8

Claim(s) 4

Abstract 1

Drawing(s) 1+1

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Priority documents

Translations of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (*Patents Form 7/77*)

Request for preliminary examination and search (*Patents Form 9/77*) 1

Request for substantive examination (*Patents Form 10/77*)

Any other documents
(please specify)

11. I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature *Peter D. Hudson*
PETER HUDSON

Date
12/1/00

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

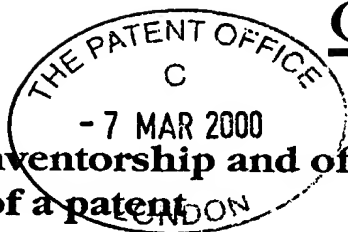
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**Statement of inventorship and of
right to grant of a patent**

The Patent Office

Cardiff Road

Newport

Gwent NP9 1RH

1. Your reference **AP5077ES/MILLER/GBRI/PH/JB**
2. Patent application number **0000907.6**
(if you know it)
3. Full name of the or of each applicant **MOTOROLA LTD**
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Basingstoke, Hampshire RG22 4PD
4. Title of the invention **INTERFACE CIRCUIT AND METHOD FOR DIGITAL SIGNALS**
5. State how the applicant(s) derived the right
from the inventor(s) to be granted a patent
THE INVENTORS ARE EMPLOYED BY THE APPLICANT.

6. How many, if any, additional Patents Forms
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7. I/We believe that the person(s) named over the page (and on
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which the above patent application relates to.

Signature

PETER HUDSON

Date

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Enter the full names, addresses and postcodes of the inventors in the boxes and underline the surnames

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7853732001

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Reminder

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INTERFACE CIRCUIT AND METHOD FOR DIGITAL SIGNALS

Field of Invention

5 This invention relates to interface circuits for digital signals.

Background of Invention

10 In electronic systems such as those in an automobile, electronic control units (ECUs) distributed around a vehicle are typically connected to a communication bus, such as the Controller Area Network (CAN) bus which is well-known in industrial and automotive applications. In
15 use, voltage differences between different (ECUs) on the bus, due for instance to differences in ground potential at the different ECUs, can cause communication errors.

It has been proposed to overcome this problem by use of
20 opto-isolators to isolate the signals produced by different ECUs. However, such a proposal has a number of drawbacks: firstly, opto-isolators are expensive; secondly, the reliability of opto-isolators may not be sufficiently robust to withstand the exacting mechanical
25 and temperature conditions produced in an automotive environment.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an interface circuit and method for digital signals, wherein
30 the above-mentioned disadvantages may be overcome or at least alleviated.

Summary of Invention

In accordance with a first aspect of the invention there is provided an interface circuit for digital signals as
5 claimed in claim 1.

In accordance with a second aspect of the invention there is provided an interface circuit for digital signals as
10 claimed in claim 7.

In accordance with a third aspect of the invention there is provided a method for interfacing digital signals as
15 claimed in claim 9.

Brief Description of Drawings

One ECU interface circuit incorporating the invention for isolating signals of units on a CAN bus will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the
20 accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 shows a schematic circuit diagram of a CAN bus ECU interface circuit.

Detailed Description

Referring to FIG. 1, a circuit 100 for interfacing an ECU
200 to a CAN bus 300 includes terminals TxduC, GnduC and RxduC for connection respectively to transmit, ground and
30 receive terminals of the ECU 200. The interface circuit 100 also has CANH, CANL and CANGnd terminals for

connection respectively to high, low and ground connections of the CAN bus 300.

The TxduC terminal is connected via a resistance 102 and
5 a capacitance 104 to an end of a winding of a transformer
106, the other end of the winding being connected to
earth. Another winding of the transformer 106 has one end
connected to a datum voltage "0", the other end of the
winding being connected via a capacitance 108 to an input
10 of a Schmitt trigger 110. The output of the Schmitt
trigger 110 is connected to the Tx terminal of a
conventional CAN Driver 112 which produces signals of
appropriate voltage, timing, etc., conforming to the CAN
bus standard. The Schmitt trigger 110 also has its output
15 connected via a resistance 114 to the datum voltage "0",
and has its input connected via a resistance 116 to the
datum voltage "0". The input of the Schmitt trigger 110
is also connected via a resistance 118 to the input of a
Schmitt trigger 120. The output of the Schmitt trigger
20 120 is connected via a resistance 122 and a capacitance
124 to the datum voltage "0". The input of the Schmitt
trigger 120 is also connected to a node intermediate the
resistance 122 and the capacitance 124.

25 The GnduC terminal is connected to earth.

The CAN Driver 112 has its Rx terminal connected (via an
optional pulse lengthener 148) via a resistance 126 and a
capacitance 128 to an end of a winding of a transformer
30 130, the other end of the winding being connected to the
datum voltage "0". Another winding of the transformer 130
has one end connected to earth, the other end of the

winding being connected via a capacitance 132 to an input of a Schmitt trigger 134. The output of the Schmitt trigger 134 is connected to the RxduC terminal. The Schmitt trigger 134 also has its output connected via a
5 resistance 136 to earth, and has its input connected via a resistance 138 to earth. The input of the Schmitt trigger 134 is also connected via a resistance 140 to the input of a Schmitt trigger 142. The output of the Schmitt trigger 142 is connected via a resistance 144 and a
10 capacitance 146 to the earth. The input of the Schmitt trigger 142 is also connected to a node intermediate the resistance 144 and the capacitance 146.

The CAN Driver 112 has its CANH and CANL terminals
15 connected respectively to the CANH and CANL terminals of the CAN bus 300. The CANGnd terminal is connected to the datum voltage "0".

It will be appreciated that the interface circuit 100 is
20 made up of two similar, complementary interface circuits 150 (elements 102-110 & 114-124) and 152 (elements 126-148) which respectively interface pulses for transmission on the bus 300 and pulses received from the bus 300.

25 Pulses (relative to earth potential) received from the TxduC terminal of the ECU 200 are differentiated by the capacitor 102 to produce positive-going and negative-going spikes corresponding to the pulses' positive-going and negative-going transitions are passed by the
30 transformer 106. The resulting signal (consisting of positive-going and negative-going spikes separated by a DC level) at the output winding of the transformer 106 is

applied to the Schmitt trigger 110, in which a positive-going spike at its input causes its upper trigger level to be crossed (resulting in the output of the Schmitt trigger going low), and a negative-going spike at its
5 input causes its upper lower trigger level to be crossed (resulting in the output of the Schmitt trigger going high). Thus the Schmitt trigger 110 reconstructs (from the pulse edge signal passed by the transformer 106) the pulse signal received at the terminal TxduC. However, it
10 will be noted that whereas the pulse signal received at the terminal TxduC is relative to the earth potential (e.g., at the input winding of the transformer 106), the reconstructed pulse signal at the output of the Schmitt trigger 110 is relative to the datum voltage "0". Thus,
15 the interface circuit 150 serves to isolate signals for transmission on the CAN bus 300 between the ground potential (earth) of the ECU 200 and the ground potential (datum voltage "0") of the CAN bus 300.

20 It will be understood that the complementary interface circuit 152 functions analogously (receiving a pulse signal relative to datum voltage "0" at the Rx terminal of the CAN Driver 112, passing the edges of this signal through the transformer 130, and reconstructing from the
25 edge signal a pulse signal relative to earth potential which is equivalent to the pulse signal received at the terminal Rx) to isolate pulse signals received from the CAN bus 300 between its ground potential (datum voltage "0") and the ground potential (earth) of the ECU 200.

30

The transformers 106 and 130 are small, low-cost transformers which, in use of the interface circuit 100,

act as isolation elements. Only the edges of pulse signals are passed via the transformers, allowing the transformers to be of low inductance (and hence low cost) while achieving very low propagation delay.

5

As explained above, signal reconstruction (reconstruction of pulses from the edges passed via the transformers) is performed by the Schmitt triggers 110 and 134 for the circuit's transmit and receive functions respectively.

10 The optimum bias point for the DC level of signal input to each of the Schmitt triggers 110 and 134 is automatically determined by use of additional Schmitt trigger 120 and 142 respectively, all the Schmitt triggers 110, 134, 120 and 142 being formed on the same
15 integrated circuit die (not shown). The additional Schmitt triggers 120 and 142 are arranged to function as simple oscillators having a nominal 50% duty cycle. It will be understood that, with variations in temperature, the trigger points of Schmitt triggers vary. However, it
20 will be understood that in the interface circuits 150 and 152 of the circuit 100, any variation of the trigger point of the Schmitt trigger 110 or 134 due to temperature variation is counteracted by variation of that Schmitt trigger's bias point due to variation of the
25 duty cycle of the oscillator formed by the additional Schmitt trigger 120 or 142 respectively, because of variation of that additional Schmitt trigger's bias point caused by the same temperature variation. Thus, the bias points of the Schmitt triggers 110 and 142 used for
30 reconstruction of the pulse signals are dynamically and optimally set.

It will be appreciated that the interface circuit 100 provides simple and effective isolation of signals on the CAN bus 300 through use of the small, low-cost isolating transformers 106 and 130 and the self-biasing arrangement of Schmitt triggers 110, 134, 120 and 142.

It will be understood that the interface circuit described above could be further enhanced. For example, a pulse lengthener 148 could additionally be used to ensure propagation of pulses of very short duration, as may be required in some CAN applications.

It will be appreciated that although in the embodiment described above an interface circuit 100 (comprising complementary interface circuits 150 and 152) is illustrated as coupling one ECU 200 to the CAN bus 300, in practice two or more ECU (not shown) may be interfaced by their own respective circuits such as the interface circuit 100 to isolate signals on the CAN bus between the ground potential of the bus and the individual ground potentials of the ECUs.

It will be further appreciated that in interfacing a particular ECU it may not be necessary for the interface circuit to have the two complementary interface circuits such as 150 and 152 described above. For example, if an ECU is simply to transmit signals onto the bus (without receiving) only an interface circuit such as the interface circuit 150 may be provided, or if an ECU is simply to receive signals from the bus (without transmitting) only an interface circuit such as the interface circuit 152 may be provided.

It will further be appreciated as a result of the above-discussed properties of good isolation, the interface circuit 100, although rated for operation at a nominal
5 CAN bus system voltage of 12V, could instead be used with 24V or even 42V systems, the good isolation allowing operation with one wire shorted to battery or ground.

Claims

1. An interface circuit for digital signals,
comprising:
5 receiving means for receiving digital signals
relative to a first ground potential;
transformer means coupled to the receiving means for
passing edges of signals received at the
receiving means; and
10 reconstruction means coupled to the transformer
means for reconstructing signals from the edges
of signals passed by the transformer means, so
as to produce digital signals relative to a
second ground potential.
15
2. The interface circuit according to claim 1 wherein
the reconstruction means comprises Schmitt trigger
means.
- 20 3. The interface circuit according to claim 2 wherein
the Schmitt trigger means comprises bias means for
biasing the DC level of the edge signals between the
trigger levels of the Schmitt trigger means.
- 25 4. The interface circuit according to claim 2 wherein
the reconstruction means further comprises
oscillator means coupled to the Schmitt trigger
means for setting the bias point of the Schmitt
trigger means to reduce the temperature variability
30 thereof.

5. The interface circuit according to claim 4 wherein the oscillator means comprises a Schmitt trigger arrangement.
- 5 6. The interface circuit according to claim 5 wherein the Schmitt trigger means and the Schmitt trigger arrangement are located on the same semiconductor die.

7. An interface circuit for interfacing digital signals to and from a bus, comprising:
first receiving means for receiving digital signals, relative to a first ground potential, for
5 transmission on the bus;
first transformer means coupled to the first receiving means for passing edges of signals received at the first receiving means;
first reconstruction means coupled to the first
10 transformer means for reconstructing signals from the edges of signals passed by the first transformer means, so as to produce digital signals, relative to a second ground potential, for transmission on the bus;
15 second receiving means for receiving digital signals, relative to the second ground potential, from the bus;
second transformer means coupled to the second receiving means for passing edges of signals
20 received at the second receiving means; and
second reconstruction means coupled to the second transformer means for reconstructing signals from the edges of signals passed by the second transformer means, so as to produce digital
25 signals, relative to the first ground potential, from the bus.
8. The interface circuit according to claim 7 wherein the first and second reconstruction means comprise
30 respectively first and second Schmitt trigger means.

9. A method for interfacing digital signals,
comprising:
receiving digital signals relative to a first ground
potential;
5 applying the received digital signals to transformer
means to pass edges of the received digital
signals; and
reconstructing signals from the signal edges passed
by the transformer means so as to produce
10 digital signals relative to a second ground
potential.
10. The method for interfacing digital signals according
to claim 9 wherein the step of reconstructing
15 comprises applying the signal edges passed by the
transformer means to Schmitt trigger means so as to
produce digital signals relative to a second ground
potential.
- 20 11. An interface circuit for digital signals
substantially as hereinbefore described with
reference to the accompanying drawing.
- 25 12. A method for interfacing digital signals
substantially as hereinbefore described with
reference to the accompanying drawing.

Abstract

INTERFACE CIRCUIT AND METHOD FOR DIGITAL SIGNALS

5

An interface circuit (100) and method for interfacing digital signals with a bus, comprising: means (TxduC) for receiving digital signals, for transmission on the bus, relative to a first ground potential; transformer means
10 (106) for passing edges of the received digital signals; and reconstruction means (110) for reconstructing signals from the edges of signals passed by the transformer means, so as to produce digital signals, for transmission on the bus, relative to a second ground potential. A
15 similar circuit (CANL, 130, 134) interfaces, from the second ground potential to the first ground potential, signals received from the bus. The reconstruction means may use Schmitt triggers, whose bias points may be set by oscillators incorporating further Schmitt triggers (120,
20 142) located on the same semiconductor die to reduce temperature variability.

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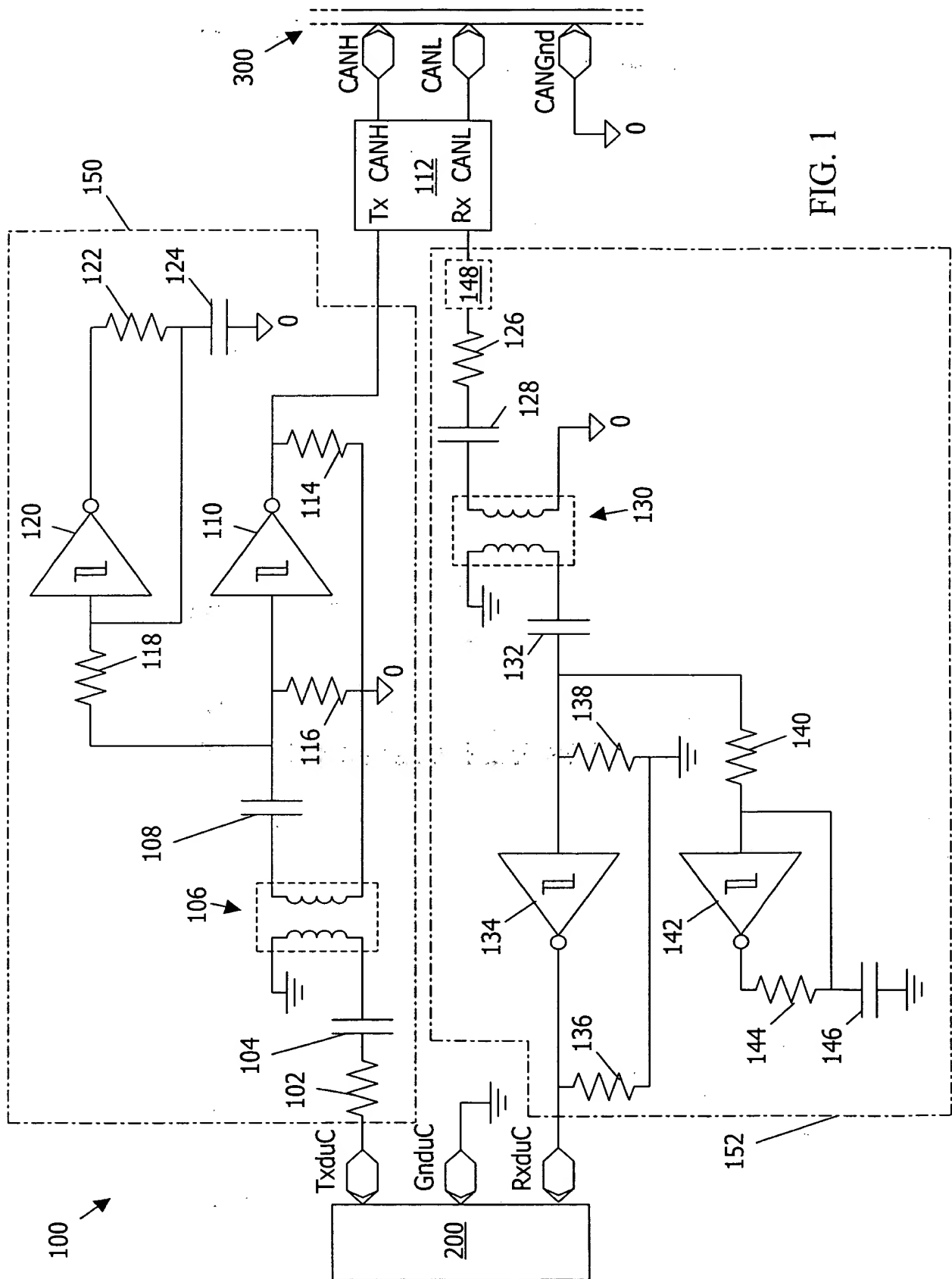


FIG. 1

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